GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
LAW AND JUSTICE
LOK SABHA

STARRED QUESTION NO:169
ANSWERED ON:09.03.2007
STATE FUNDING OF ELECTIONS
Dhindsa Shri Sukhdev Singh;Reddy Shri Mekapati Rajamohan

Will the Minister of LAW AND JUSTICE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government has initiated any steps to introduce the practice of State funding of elections and is considering various options and alternatives in this regard; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

Answer

MINISTER OF THE STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF LAW AND JUSTICE (SHRI H.R. BHARDWAJ)

(a) and (b): A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

STATEMENT REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO PARTS (a) AND (b) OF THE LOK SABHA STARRED QUESTION NO.169 DATED 9TH MARCH, 2007.

The Government has considered the various recommendations/proposals relating to the State funding of elections received by it. With a view to building consensus among the recognized political parties, the Government requested the Election Commission of India on 2nd January, 2006 to recommend in consultation with the recognized political parties the quantities of certain items to be provided to them or to the candidates set up by them taking into consideration the geographical features and means of communication available.

2. The Election Commission convened a meeting of all recognized political parties on the 15th February, 2006 to elicit their views on the proposal on State funding, made by the Government. Representatives of all the six National Parties and 28 out of 44 State parties participated in the meeting. The Election Commission has noted that there was complete unanimity on the need for curbing the role of money power in elections, but no unanimous opinion on the suggestions made by the Government could be arrived at.

3. Notwithstanding the absence of consensus among the recognized political parties and its own apprehensions, the Election Commission has stated that in case the Government still proposes to go ahead with partial State funding, the Commission recommends as under:-

(a) For recognized political parties:-

(i) Rent free accommodation may be provided to National Parties at their national headquarters and to recognized State Parties, at the registered address of the party as reflected in the Commission's record.

(ii) A total number of 3,000 telephone calls for a National Party headquarters and 1,000 calls for a State party headquarters per month may be funded over and above the free calls, if any, permitted to any subscriber.

(iii) In addition, a computer with an internet connection may be provided in the headquarters of each National and recognized State party.

(iv) All recognized National and State parties are already being granted adequate time on Government controlled electronic media (Doordarshan and AIR) according to a well devised scheme by the Commission. As for allocation of time to these parties on private cable television network and electronic media, Ministry of Information & Broadcasting has to examine whether the private cable networks have the obligation under the law to make some time available, free of cost, for such political telecasts.

(b) For Candidates of recognized parties:-

(i) A total quantity of 300 litres of Petrol or 450 litres of Diesel (on the assumption that a candidate would cover, on an average, 200 kms consuming 20 litres of petrol/30 litres of diesel, per day during the 14 days period of campaign and day of poll) for each candidate may be funded for every assembly segment, subject, however, to a maximum of 1500 litres of petrol or 2,250 litres of diesel for a Parliamentary Constituency.

(ii) The issue of supplying specified quantity of paper for printing voter slips, etc., can be decided in accordance with the number of electors in the Constituency.

(iii) Every candidate may send one communication (not weighting more than 10 grams) to each registered elector in his Constituency at State cost.

(iv) One set of loudspeaker with microphone for every assembly segment, subject to maximum of 10 sets for a Parliamentary Constituency, may be funded to each candidate.

(v) Instead of installing land-line telephone, it would be preferable to provide a Mobile Pre-Paid Card to every candidate for Rs.1500/- (i.e.Rs.100/-per day) for every assembly segment, subject to maximum of Rs. 7,500/- for a Parliamentary Constituency.

(vi) The candidates' camps may be provided at State cost at each polling station (beyond a distance of 200 metres) with two chairs and a table, for each candidate.

(vii) Refreshments and food packets arranged for counting staff inside the counting hall may be provided also to the counting agents of each candidate, irrespective of whether he is sponsored by a political party or an independent candidate.

The Commission has further recommended that -

I. Whereas the items mentioned at (a) above may be provided to political parties by the Government, the materials/facilities mentioned at (b) above may be furnished to the candidates directly by the District Election Officers concerned.

II. The expenditure on account of funding on the above items under (b) should be suitably deductible from the expenditure ceiling of a candidate.

4. The Government has not taken any final decision in this regard.